

TO EACH – DIFFERENT GIFTS

Pastor Alva Looze

Many of you have heard me talk about not having the gift of music. Many of you have heard me sing and know that I don't have the gift of music. I sure wish I had the ability to sing, play an instrument but I do not. I also wish that I had a better memory to remember name, I work at it, it's getting better but I don't have it. Also, I wish I were better with the mechanics of things. Mechanics – I really have to work on them. Take my cell phone, just basic numbers plugged in. I have what most people consider a old cell phone purchased in 2003. One of my to do's on my bucket list was to put all my numbers in my phone. Thurs A.M. this was my priority. They went in nicely but not where I wanted them. I called my self-help number to be walked through, still couldn't do it. Went to work checked with Patty and Charlotte but they couldn't help me. After work went to Radio Shack, a nice young man showed me and didn't even try to sell me a new phone. Sometimes these wishes have caused me problems as they have focused on the wrongs things. I focus on what I don't have instead of the gifts that I have. Sometimes I question God on why I don't have these gifts instead of appreciating the gifts that I have.

Wisdom is the knowing what gifts we have and exercising them. Wisdom is knowing what gifts we don't have and encouraging those who have them to use them.

Paul, in I Corinthians speaks at length about gifts and how we should regard them. He also lets us know about our own gifts and the giftedness of others. What gifts do you have? What gifts do you rejoice in yourself and in others? Is it the gift of praying for others? In our prayer chain I know of persons who write down every one and offer up prayers each day for every one. That is their gift and they take it seriously. Do you have the gift of caring? As parents I think all of us have the gift of caring and some are much better at it than others. Some care not only for family, friends but for many others. The gift of service? That gift is very evident in our church. Teachers, youth leaders, properties, committees, etc. Without the gift of service the church would be in sad shape.

Some gifts are glorious and everyone knows about them. They are easy to see and praise like the church in Corinth that Paul wrote about it. While still other have the gifts of inspired music and of singing, some have beautiful strong voices to preach, some can lead a meeting, a stewardship project or mission project with enthusiasm for doing the mission of Christ in the world.

Some gifts are subtler, we don't even know they are going on, are continual, and often fail to receive any recognition. Also in the church we have quieter people who are less visible people. Some write card, visit the elderly and the shut-ins. Some turn on lights, welcome those entering the church, others fix copy machines and clean the walkways. Some give good hugs to those who need it, baked and cook for those who are bereaved. Some look after the little ones in the nursery, help with the newsletter and pray quietly every day for the ministers, the congregation & families.

Mildred Barger wrote the prayer "Instrument of Ten Strings" that I would like to share with you:

An old gray-haired man prayed, "O, Lord, we will praise Thee with an instrument of ten strings. "He offered his eyes to look only to God, his ears for listening to God's voice, his hands for service, his feet for walking in God's ways, his tongue for bearing testimony of God's loving kindness and his heart for loving God alone."

Two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, one tongue, and one heart – a living instrument of ten strings!

With our eyes, we read in God's Word of His majesty and everlasting love. We see the promise of eternal life; also with our eyes we behold a glorious sunset. Surely nothing could be more beautiful, and yet the most gorgeous sunset is only a tiny sample of the glorious colors of heaven.

With our ears, we hear the gospel preached and voices lifted in praise. We hear the mockingbird's trill, a child's delighted laughter, a cascading waterfall, and the roar of thunder. We are reminded of God's great power and of His goodness.

We have hands to do His work and to lift heavenward in praise. Martha Snell Nicholson wrote a poem expressing that God took the things she treasured most from her hands. He then invited her to hold them open so He could fill them from His store of riches. Our hand is the only hand Christ has to His work. When we lift them to Him, empty, and let Him fill them, the work we do for Him brings praise to His name.

Feet suggest walking – moving on – action. The prophet Isaiah spoke of beautiful feet that bring good tidings. However, before we take the good news to others, we walk with God as part of His family; so feet also speak of our spiritual walk – our lifestyle with God.

In the Old Testament, the story of Enoch, who walked with God, illustrated a holy life. Enoch became God's man, sharing the peace and joy of God before he entered the eternal rest when God took him home. Enoch walked among men and at the same time walked with God. So with our feet we praise the Lord as we walk in His way, doing His work.

God gave us only one tongue but it is mighty, for good or evil. No words are spoken without it, nor can a song rise from our lips. Whether we speak eloquently or stumble over each word, whether we sing off key or with perfect pitch, God accepts our efforts for Him.

Finally, God has supplied a heart with which to praise Him. He sees our heart's deepest need and longings. He values a heart that is broken, humble, and contrite. He delights in a heart lifted to Him in worship.

With our heart in tune, our whole instrument of ten strings may be used to serve Him. Which "instrument" do you use the most often! Which one would you like God to use to bring glory to Him?

I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten stringed lyre. I will make music to you.”
Psalm 144:9

We need to claim and celebrate what God has given to us without worrying about what others are or are not doing, and about what others may or may not think. Each one of us

has something very special in our hearts – something that has been place there by God, something that is beautiful and good and precious in his eyes, something that is important to our church, our community, and our world.

We all have gifts. Let us claim the gifts, open them up, and celebrate them. And then use them; offer them freely without worrying whether or not your gift is greater than or less than someone else's.

You are worthy, and your gift is worthy for God gave them to you. Let us offer them up to him. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we now go forth into the world, to fulfill our calling as the people of God, the body of Christ.

PRAYER

Open our hearts to receive the gifts you have given us. Amen